BC's Freshwater Recreational Fishery

Setting Direction For The Future

Context Report

Prepared By:
Joint Government – Sector Steering Committee
May 2002

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May 13, 2002

Freshwater Fishing Strategy Steering Committee

Dear Committee Members:

Please accept my gratitude for the work and dedication of the steering committee in developing the Freshwater Fishing Strategy.

The collaborative work of angling organizations, independent anglers, government agencies and First Nations is an excellent example of a public – private partnership, and an example which I look forward to being repeated on other initiatives in the future.

The background work contained in the Context Report and the Consultation Report provide a thorough compendium of information about freshwater fishing which supports fisheries management efforts.

I can assure you that the strategy will be considered in the evolution of freshwater fisheries management in British Columbia. Although the strategy was not informed by internal discussions about the fisheries management mandate and resources included in the Ministry Service Plan, I can assure you that the strategy will be considered as the Service Plan is implemented.

Again, congratulations and thank you for your efforts in bringing this significant work to conclusion. I look forward to continuing to work with the steering committee members in the future.

Best regards,

Joyce Murray
Minister

Preface

This document is the product of Joint Government – Sector process, which provided for input from all interests within the freshwater recreational fishing sector. This report, the 'Context Report,' documents the current status of the freshwater recreational fishing sector.

A Joint Government – Sector Steering Committee was formed to consolidate the input and information to develop the Strategy. The committee consisted of the following government agencies and organizations related to sport fishing:

- British Columbia Wildlife Federation
- British Columbia Federation of Fly Fishers
- British Columbia Federation of Drift Fishers
- British Columbia Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association
- Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia
- Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia
- Trout Unlimited Canada – British Columbia
- Representative of the retailers and wholesalers of fishing equipment
- Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection
- Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management
- Tourism BC
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- British Columbia Assets and Land Corporation
- Union of BC Municipalities

The British Columbia Aboriginal Fisheries Commission participated as observers at the Steering Committee level and provided input throughout the process.

Two other documents produced by the Steering Committee include:

- **Consultation Report;** summarizes the extensive public input received during the consultation portion of this process; and,
- **Joint Government-Sector Strategy and Action Plan**.

The Strategy and Action Plan is a blueprint for government and the sector to continue to work together to help shape and set direction for the freshwater recreational fishery of British Columbia. It recognizes the key issues of the fishery and identifies goals, objectives and specific actions to address these issues.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Need for a Strategy

British Columbia's freshwater and tidal recreational fisheries provide substantial social, cultural, tourism, economic and conservation advantages to the people and communities of British Columbia. Many of the fisheries are recognized as being world-class in terms of the quality of angling experience. To maintain and develop existing recreational fisheries as well as realize new opportunities, anglers, sector businesses, communities and all levels of government would benefit from the creation of a common vision for the fishery and a supporting strategic plan.

Every year, nearly 400,000 licenced anglers seek more than 24 species of fish, often in spectacular natural settings that surround tens of thousands of lakes and streams throughout the province. Recreational fishing is a major tourist attraction in British Columbia for domestic and foreign markets. Many interior communities have seen remarkable increases in tourist activity as a result of the popularity of freshwater recreational fishing adventures. These anglers generate significant economic benefits that are realized throughout the province:

- Purchases of $494 million and government revenues of $99 million in 1995[1]; and
- Jobs estimated at 3,300 and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $118.9 million in 1999[2].

Freshwater fishing is also an integral part of British Columbia's culture and heritage. Residents and non-residents are passionate about recreational fishing and the opportunities it provides to be outdoors and experience the natural beauty and peace of this province. It is an activity for all ages, and for many, it is an activity for the entire family.

However, despite the social and economic importance and potential of the freshwater recreational fishery, few people are aware of the sector's full scope or appreciate the dynamics involved to ensure a healthy and vibrant fishery for all generations. Before a shared strategy can be developed, those involved must achieve a common understanding of the makeup of the fishery, its regional diversity, and the issues and jurisdictions that surround it as well as a sense of what the future offers.

Another factor complicating the development of a shared vision is the broad mix of sport fishing interests and overlapping government jurisdictions. The sector is highly diverse and includes the interests of: resident and non-resident anglers, and their associated angling associations; and the recreational fishing and tourism industries (e.g., resorts, fishing camps, angling guides, hotels/motels, campgrounds, air charter companies, tackle manufacturers and retailers, boat and equipment suppliers, etc.). Others with interests in the fishery are regional tourism associations and all levels of government (e.g,, local/regional, First Nations, provincial and federal). These groups have tended to work more independently than together, depending on the issue, and the wide regional diversity of the freshwater recreational fishery further complicates interactions.

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[1] Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 1995 National Survey of Recreational Fishing in Canada.
[2] British Columbia's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector, 2002 Edition. BC Stats.

There have been many changes in the freshwater recreational fishery in the last 15 years. Even greater changes are expected over the next 10 years. Sector businesses, angling groups, communities and governments must have a sound grasp of what this vital fishery is all about and the tools required to plan and prepare for the future.

To preserve the quality and variety of freshwater angling experiences in British Columbia, foster a thriving and diverse sport fishing industry, and generate jobs and economic activity for communities throughout the province, it is necessary for the sector and government to work together to develop a coordinated, long-term Strategy and Action Plan that will:

- Set out a common shared vision for the freshwater recreational fishery;
- State key strategic objectives to achieve the vision; and,
- Provide a clear action plan that identifies priorities, associated supporting activities and strategic partnerships.

A joint government-sector partnership was established to develop a vision and Strategy for the freshwater, or inland recreational fishery. The Strategy will be a blueprint for government and the sector to work together to help shape and set direction for the fishery. Fisheries Renewal BC has provided the funding for this initiative.

1.2 Working Towards a Strategy

The strategy was developed through a multi-level consultation program. The ultimate goal was to create a sense of ownership of the eventual vision and Strategy by sector and government interests. The program included the following components:

- ***Six Working Groups*** comprised of government and sector representatives from various regions of the province were established. These groups met to identify their ideas and concerns regarding the future direction of the fishery.
- ***Twelve Open-House Sessions*** were held throughout the province to provide information on the fishery. Attendees were invited to provide input by completing a survey.
- ***A Web site*** was created to keep the sport fishing sector informed of the initiative, enable this group to obtain the information presented at the open-house sessions and provide input by completing a survey.
- A ***Toll-Free Phone Line*** was established to provide those individuals without Internet access to obtain the information presented at the open-house sessions and provide input by completing a survey.

This Context Report attempts to provide a current picture of the freshwater recreational fisheries in British Columbia. The information in this report is a starting point for the many discussions that will take place during development of the Strategy. The report documents the current state of the sector, as well as key trends and existing relationships between the sector and government.

1.3 Information Sources

Although several studies of British Columbia's freshwater recreational fishery have been conducted in the past 10 years, there is no single source that provides a complete picture. This report attempts to present much of the information dealing with specific aspects of the fishery contained in existing documents.

Where possible, time series data have been used to identify trends within the sector. The key data sources include: angler licence sales; the results of the 1995 National Survey of Recreational Fishing (a survey conducted every five years); Licenced Angling Guide data; information on fishing lodges and resorts, and a report prepared by BC Stats to measure the economic value of the recreational fishery.

2. Freshwater Recreational Fishing Sector

2.1 The Fishing Experience

British Columbia offers a diversity of freshwater recreational fishing experiences on its thousands of lakes, rivers and streams. In the global marketplace, the province's recreational fishing opportunities attract the attention of those seeking to experience its diversity of species and the natural setting. There are 24 popular species of fish, each with their own unique characteristics. Resident and non-resident anglers share an interest in the experiences which British Columbia offers. They also share a desire to protect the experience and resource for the future. An overwhelming theme communicated by the recreational sector is to ensure 'fish come first.' Anglers and sport fishing businesses want to work in co-operation with those who manage the fisheries to ensure a future for fish as well as the experiences and livelihoods those fish provide.

The stability of the recreational fishery depends on many factors, of which a critical one is the ability to maintain the fishing experience. To be viable, the sport fishery must provide anglers with an opportunity to go fishing, an expectation of catching fish and a natural setting in which to enjoy the fishing experience. In addition, the fishing experience means different things to different anglers in terms of the species pursued, fishing techniques and location. All of these factors must be considered when developing a vision for the fishery.

2.2 Components of the Sector

There are essentially two user groups. The recreational angler is considered the primary user who is seeking a sport fishing experience. Businesses which cater to recreational anglers are regarded as secondary users. At the centre of the sector is the fish resource that creates the sport fishing experience. Government plays a key role in managing the resource and influencing the direction in which the sector evolves.

Recreational angling creates significant economic benefits for the province, including direct and indirect revenue and employment opportunities. Expenditures by individual anglers vary considerably depending on the type of sport fishing experience being sought and how that experience is provided. Recreational anglers can be divided into two general groups. Independent anglers assume responsibility for their own fishing gear, fuel, overnight accommodation, meals and transportation. Accommodation for this group of anglers may include camping on their own or purchasing an overnight stay at a hotel or motel. They may purchase meals at a restaurant or provide their own food. However, these anglers are not purchasing sport fishing packages. The second general group of anglers purchases sport fishing services or packages. They select from a wide range of fishing experiences, which could include one or more services such as accommodation, guiding, meals, boats and equipment and, for the more remote lodges, air transportation. Fishing lodges or resorts range from rustic with very few amenities to full service providing first-class accommodation and many additional features. Alternatively, anglers may purchase the services of a guide, which could include additional services such as a vessel, fishing equipment and meals. Over the course of a year, an angler may fall into both groups, fishing independently at times and, at other times, purchasing sport fishing packages and depending on the sport fishing businesses to provide his/her sport fishing experience.

Businesses which cater to the recreational angler reflect a wide range and diversity of size and services offered. They can be divided into two broad categories:

- Businesses which are directly dependent on sport fishing activity, including lodges, angling guides, boat rentals, tackle manufacturers and specialty retail shops. These businesses earn 50% or more of their revenue from sport fishing activities; and,
- Businesses which are partially dependent on the sport fishery, earning less than 50% of their revenue from sport fishing activities.

These businesses are located throughout the province in urban, rural and remote areas. Some are easily accessibly by car, while others require access by boat, float plane or helicopter. Several rural and remotes businesses also use aircraft on a daily basis to transport clients to a variety of fishing locations. Communities can also provide additional recreational opportunities (e.g., hiking, wildlife viewing and adventure tourism), which are not always offered by the sport fishing businesses but may attract potential sport fishing customers to the area. In return, communities realize economic benefits from sport fishing activities.

3. Freshwater Recreational Fishing Resource

Every year, about 400,000 licenced freshwater anglers pursue more than 24 kinds of game fish. Much of this angling is done in some of the world's most spectacular geography. The range of angling opportunity is truly staggering, from small urban lakes stocked with put-and-take domestic strains of rainbow trout to totally wild and unspoiled lakes and streams which are difficult to access. Another increasingly unique feature of the freshwater fishery in British Columbia is its year-round availability. Ice fishing and winter stream fisheries are very popular.

There are 85 species and sub-species of freshwater fishes in the province, of which 34 are considered rare enough to be closely tracked.[3] Twenty species of fish indigenous to British Columbia occur nowhere else in Canada. As a result, an increasingly important factor in freshwater fish management is a heightened concern by the public and fisheries managers for these rare, or at-risk and usually non-game species.

This resource depends on the habitats, the species and stocks that occupy them, the users and our ability to devise the right management regimes to perpetuate it. How well these components are understood and how skillfully they are integrated will determine the sustainability of the resource. The mission of the British Columbia Freshwater Fisheries states, "To protect, build and sustain diverse and healthy freshwater fish populations and foster sustainable freshwater fisheries for recreation, commercial opportunities and rural community economic stability"[4].

The function of maintaining biological diversity and the ecosystem has become a legitimate and major concern and will continue to influence management decisions for game fish. However, despite this concern, management for sustainable and diverse fisheries will clearly continue to be a government priority

3.1 Habitat

Description of Habitats

The province is drained by two major drainage systems, the Pacific and Arctic. The Pacific drainage basins are: the Columbia; the Fraser; the north coast basin comprised of the Alsek, Taku, and Iskut-Stikine; the Yukon; the Queen Charlotte Archipelago; the central coast basin comprised of the two large basins of the Nass and Skeena in the north and the smaller southern basins of the Dean, Bella Coola, Klinaklini, and Homathko; and Vancouver Island. The Arctic drainage is the Mackenzie basin, which is the largest basin in the province comprised of the Peace and Liard at over 270,000 sq km. More than 75% of the province is above 1000 metres, which means most of the rivers have steep gradients, and gradient is likely the single most important factor in fish distribution. Generally speaking, the higher the drainage system, the lower the number of species.

[3] Cannings, S.G., Ptolemy, J., 1998. Rare Freshwater Fish of British Columbia. BC Environment.
[4] Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. British Columbia Fisheries: Strategic Program Plan 2001-04, Draft.

There are significant species and ecosystem differences between the Arctic and Pacific basins. The various species assemblages in the different drainage basins were largely determined by the complex post-glacial history of the province.[5]

The Mackenzie basin is characterized by low precipitation, low temperatures, heavy spring runoff and hard water laden with sediment. This drainage area is not rich in lakes, except for the shallow acidic lakes common in the northeastern corner of the province, and generally exhibits lower productivity than the Pacific basins.

The Pacific drainage basins are commonly more productive than those of the Arctic and contain the vast majority of the lakes in the province. The Pacific is a region of sharp contrasts, from the dry southern interior to the streams of the 'wet' coast, and north to the cold and drier drainage of the Yukon.

It has been estimated that there are 20,000 lakes and 789,00 kilometres of streams in British Columbia. Of the total lakes, there are approximately 211 with an area larger than 1,000 hectares, and therefore considered large lakes for management purposes. The rest, and the vast majority, are less than 1,000 hectares in size and are considered small lakes. While this labeling is somewhat arbitrary, it enables managers to classify the small lakes into categories such as interior plateau, coastal, high pH, etc. for easier management. Large lakes are typically more complex ecologically and require lake-specific management actions. Naturally, there are exceptions to this two-level categorization of lake sizes, and in the gray areas, regional biologists decide on management tactics.

Of the more than 700,000 kilometres of stream length, 28,800 kilometres support salmonid stocks that migrate from the ocean (anadromous streams). The rest, which do not support migratory stocks, are considered streams that support resident stocks (non-anadromous or resident streams). It should be emphasized that resident fish may, and frequently do, also live in anadromous streams. There are similarities in the management strategies for the two kinds of streams, particularly with respect to habitat management, but some differences exist in species management. For example, some anadromous stocks are augmented by hatchery techniques, but seldom is this true for resident stream fisheries.

Protection of Habitats

Habitat protection is fundamental to the sustainability of the fish resource. Moreover, if sustainability of the fishery is truly a provincial objective, protection is always less costly than restoration, opportunity costs notwithstanding. For example, it may be more costly to construct a bridge rather than a culvert, but the culvert will remove riparian cover on either bank of the stream that is equal to the width of the fill. Also, culverts are notorious for limiting fish passage, particularly of juveniles. In the long term, construction of a bridge with preservation of the riparian cover and maintenance of the natural stream channel may well be much less costly than retrofitting and constantly maintaining the culvert for fish passage.

Most people who are familiar with fish and their environment intuitively understand the meaning of habitat. However, there is a legal definition of fish habitat in the federal *Fisheries Act* that is used in court actions. This definition is important because the various habitat attributes fish require are named, and they are protected whether they are needed directly or indirectly by the fish.

[5] McPhail, J.D., Carveth, R., 1992. A Foundation for Conservation: the Nature and Origin of the Freshwater Fish Fauna of British Columbia. BC Environment.

In 1986, after wide consultations with various industries and provincial governments, Fisheries and Oceans Canada released the Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat. It became known as the Net Gain Policy because net gain of habitat was the goal. One of the key principles of the policy is 'No Net Loss.' This imperative principle drives the habitat protection policy that federal and provincial fisheries authorities use in working with various land and water-use developments. The policy also identifies restoration, enhancement and creation of habitat as the other important supporting principles.

Virtually any development in a watershed that uses land or water can potentially affect fish habitat. Forestry, mining, agriculture and urban development are four activities that have had enormous impacts on fish habitat. To try to lessen some of these impacts, the government has created several pieces of legislation, policy, and guidelines to direct various industrial activities. The *Forest Practices Code Act, Fish Protection Act,* and other land development and stewardship guidelines are examples. Fish habitat protection in agricultural activities remains an issue of great concern to fisheries agencies. Controlling the impact of agricultural on habitat is still largely done via guidelines and voluntary codes of practice. Some of these initiatives have made a significant difference in the resource extraction practices in the province, but unfortunately, they are not enough, and net loss of habitat is continuing.

3.2 Species and Populations

Description of Species

There are 24 game fish listed in the 1999-2000 freshwater fishing regulations synopsis. The following table illustrates the rich diversity and distribution of game fish by fisheries administrative region. The letter F denotes Frequent, P is for Present and R is for Rare.

Exhibit 3.1 Regional Distribution of Freshwater Species

Sportfish	BC Environment Region								
	Vancouver Island	Lower Mainland	Thompson Nicola	Kootenay	Cariboo Chilcotin	Skeena	Omineca	Peace	Okanagan
Rainbow trout	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Steelhead	★	★	★		★	★			
Coastal cutthroat	★	★	★		★	★			
Westslope cutthroat			○	★					●
Brown trout	○			★					●
Dolly Varden	●	★		★		★		●	
Bull trout		●	●	★	★	★	★	★	
Lake trout		●	●		★	★	★	●	
Brook trout	○	●	●	★	●		●	●	●
Kokanee	○	●	★	★	★	★	★		★
Salmon (in freshwater)	★	★	★		★	★		○	●
Inconnu						●		●	
Goldeye								●	
Mountain whitefish		★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Lake whitefish		●	●	●	★	★	★	●	●
Arctic grayling						★	★	★	
Burbot		○	●	★	★	★	★	★	★
White sturgeon		●	●	●	●	○	●		
Largemouth bass		●		●					●
Smallmouth bass	●		●						●
Black crappie		●							●
Northern pike						★		★	
Yellow perch	●			●				●	●
Walleye				●				●	●
Grayfish	★	★	★	★	★				●

Note: ★ = frequent ● = presence ○ = rare

Population Status

It is difficult to find a provincial overview, broad-scale count of species or fish population information, and often they do not exist. Some population trend information does exist in reports such as the Vancouver Island steelhead recovery report[6] and the Slaney anadromous salmon and trout report.[7] The state of steelhead varies from region to region in the province. The stocks on Vancouver Island began showing significant evidence of decline in the early '90s, and today, many of the island's stocks are in jeopardy to the extent that the Living Gene Bank program is underway to

[6] Wightman, J.C., Ward, B.R., Ptolemy, R.A, Axford, F.N., 1998. A Recovery Plan for East Coast Vancouver Island Steelhead Trout. BC Fisheries Technical Report.

[7] Slaney, T.L., Hyatt, K.D., Northcote, T.G., Fielden, R.J., 1996. Status of Anadromous Salmon and Trout in British Columbia and the Yukon. Fisheries. Vol. 21, No. 10. American Fisheries Society.

preserve genotypes. In contrast, the Skeena drainage populations appear to be relatively healthy with some stocks exhibiting good numbers.

There is also concern regarding white sturgeon populations. Recovery programs are underway for several of the stocks in both the Fraser and Columbia drainages.

A general indication of species rarity and the degree of need for conservation of several sport fish species are available from the report on rare freshwater fish[8], the draft provincial strategic plan for the conservation and management of cutthroat trout[9], and the provincial strategic char conservation and management plan[10].

Both coastal and west slope cutthroat stocks declined after continued access development and exploitation, presumably from habitat alteration and increased angler activity. Char stocks throughout the province have exhibited very similar trends, with the added problem of being less productive because of their cold water habitats, slower growth rates and late-maturing characteristic.

Rainbow trout are by far the most popular and important freshwater game fish. In 1988, the policy for Canada's freshwater fisheries[11] was released, and it suggested the rainbow trout population of the Pacific drainages was declining because of overfishing. However, by definition, rainbow trout populations in the almost 1,100 stocked lakes remain healthy and, in fact, support about 50% of the freshwater angler effort [12]. There are discrete wild populations of rainbow trout that are also healthy, but this information is sparse and difficult to find. However, rainbow trout populations respond very much the same as cutthroat to access development and exploitation. Declines in populations from pristine levels to virtual extinction in particular systems have occurred in just a few years.

Despite the above information, which may seem alarming, there are thousands of lakes and streams in the province which regional fisheries staff continue to manage conservatively to ensure there is a healthy wild population of game fish to sustain recreational fishing.

Threats to Populations

Probably the most significant current and common threat to wild freshwater game fish is access development. Management agencies have often found themselves trying to manage trout waters after unplanned and burgeoning access is already underway. Unrestricted access development and the lack of an early warning system for access have a dramatic effect on abundance.[13] Compounding the problems of access development are the associated impacts on habitat, such as poor stream crossings, increases in sediment loads, loss of riparian cover and water contamination from toxic substances. Integrated access planning will assist in managing these impacts.

However, in the long term, global warming may be the overriding concern for cold water species. The scientific community as a fact has largely accepted global warming. Cold water species such as trout salmon and char will experience increased environmental stress because of climate change. The expected increase in rainfall during the winter when the eggs of fall-spawning species are incubating may scour eggs from stream gravels. The prediction for less rainfall during the summer may

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[8]

[9] Anon., A Strategic Plan for the Conservation and management of Cutthroat Trout in British Columbia (Draft). 2000. BC.Fisheries Conservation Section.

[10] Anon. A Strategic Plan for the Conservation and Management of Char in British Columbia. 1994. BC Environment.

[11] Pearse, P.H., Rising to the Challenge. A new policy for Canada's freshwater fisheries. 1988. Canadian Wildlife Federation.

[12] Anon. National Survey of Recreational Fishing. 1995. Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

[13] Griffith, R.P. 2000. Personal communication.

cause lethal temperature conditions, particularly in the interior where it is warmer and water is already in a shorter supply. In the short term, little can be done to prevent this, but preservation of certain genotypes may be valuable in retaining maximum population diversity.

Over-fishing is a concern for some specific species and systems. Certain lakes, selected for their aesthetic and productivity qualities and managed as high-quality fisheries, are exhibiting classic over fishing responses as a result of their increasing popularity.[14] Reduction in limits is a tool that is used to maintain a quality experience.

Habitat erosion continues to be a problem. Despite the national Net Gain Policy with the no net loss principle, a slow net loss of habitat continues. Most workers in the field recognize that the greatest losses result from the cumulative effects of many small- to medium-sized developments. Most large developments are subject to a rigorous assessment procedure, while most smaller ones are not. At a minimum, the development of workable habitat protection standards for local government via the *Fish Protection Act* and vigilant enforcement of all pertinent environmental legislation are vital to stop the loss.

Water quality is another concern. Industrial and urban effluent sources must be scrupulously monitored, and non-point sources must be identified and controlled. The severity of the effects of pollution is directly related to the amount of dilution. In the coming decades, the effects of contaminants could be magnified if stream flows are reduced because of overuse and global warming. Water quality standards need to be regularly reviewed and rigorously applied and enforced.

Water use will continue to be a significant issue, particularly in the dry interior part of the province and with the advent of global warming. Increasing planning for water use, and introducing best-management practices for irrigation technology and domestic water use would be two useful initiatives.

Often ignored, or viewed as a benign activity, is the introduction of exotic or non-indigenous species. In general, well-intentioned introductions have often taken place without environmental impact assessments. Also, the ensuing negative impacts are often overlooked for long periods.[15] Exotic fish can cause the following problems: habitat alterations; changes in the trophic structure of the environment; spatial alterations; gene pool deterioration through hybridization; and disease introduction. A very conservative and cautious approach must be taken to all introductions of exotic species, and the escape of domesticated exotic species must be prevented.

3.3 Management of the Freshwater Fish Resource

Agencies and Roles

Fisheries management in British Columbia is complex and affected by a number of jurisdictions that are often conflicting. There are five federal departments involved in fish and fish habitat management, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans being the most important. The Department of Environment carries the responsibility for enforcing federal pollution standards and legislation. There are six provincial Ministries and agencies that affect fish management. The most important ones are the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, which is responsible for fish and fish habitat management and protection and fisheries management. Because of their powers for zoning and creating by-laws, local governments that are enabled by

[14] Peterson, D. 2000. Personal communication.
[15] Warburton, P., Non-indigenous Freshwater Fish in British Columbia: their Distribution, Impacts on Native Fish Populations and Potential Solutions. 1998. BC Environment, Lands and Parks.

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services legislation can also have significant effects on fish, particularly on habitat. The Role of Government section in this report describes the working relationships and responsibilities of the various agencies.

The following summary, illustrates the range of services provided by the provincial government with respect to the Fisheries program:

- **Fisheries Management,** which includes: conservation and management; licensing and regulation of the freshwater recreational fishery; research activities on fish, fish habitat and fisheries; sport fishing development; and diversification.
- **Information Services,** including: information technology management (e.g., the Web site); fisheries database management (e.g., the Fish Information Summary System and the Stream Atlas); inventory co-ordination and standards development; and computer systems management and support.
- **Sustainable Economic Development,** which includes operation and research for the provincial Fish Culture Section. This section provides fish culture, engineering, and fish health services for the freshwater recreational programs and is a vital part of maintaining the high quality of the small lakes fishery for which the province is well known. Fish Culture annually stocks approximately 10 million fish into about 1,100 lakes and streams. The Fish Culture Section is also pivotally involved in development of the living gene bank program to try to preserve the steelhead gene pool for six streams on the east coast of Vancouver Island. In addition, to address the endangered sturgeon in the Kootenay River, Fish Culture is responsible for constructing a white sturgeon hatchery at the site of the Kootenay Trout Hatchery as part of an international sturgeon recovery team. Stocking requests go to the Fish Culture Section, and the staff at the hatcheries raise the required fish and outplant them to the various lakes throughout the province. The Fish Culture Section is unique in North America. This is entirely a result of its strong emphasis on the use of wild native stocks for culture operations, and its clear policies for protecting wild stock to preserve the integrity of natural populations. Some 95% of annual hatchery production comes from eggs and sperm from wild populations in various parts of the province.
- **Policy and Legislation,** which includes the development and co-ordination role in fisheries policy; legislative and regulatory development and analysis; and strategic, business and financial planning.

Restoration and Enhancement of Habitats

Restoration and enhancement of habitats have become important and highly visible activities for federal and provincial governments. There are a number of programs that fund this work. The following is a list of the various programs in existence.[16]

Federal - Department of Fisheries and Oceans

[16] Payne, J., (Draft report) A Comparative Analysis of the Federal and Provincial Statutory Regimes for the Protection of Fish Habitat in British Columbia. 1999. Department of Fisheries and Oceans and BC Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

- Salmonid Enhancement Program;
- Habitat Restoration and salmon Enhancement Program;
- Resource Rebuilding Program; and
- Provincial.

BC Hydro

- Water-use Planning Process;
- Systems Operations Fund;
- Peace/Williston Compensation Program;
- Columbia Basin Compensation Program;
- Bridge River/Coastal Compensation Program; and
- Power Facilities Fisheries Enhancement Programs.

Fisheries Renewal BC

- Salmonid Renewal Program (this program will be completed as of March 2002)

Forest Renewal BC

- Watershed Restoration Program.

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

- Habitat Conservation Trust Fund.
- Urban Salmon Habitat Program.

Habitat restoration and development are crucial to regaining some of the habitat lost to poor practices for resource development in the past. Equally important however, is the need to rigorously identify the candidates for restoration expenditures.

Another potentially important concept is that of community stewardship, of which there are many examples in streams and watersheds in the province. The common philosophy throughout these stewardship projects is that communities have a role and some responsibility in stewarding the aquatic resources of the water bodies in their neighbourhoods. Stewardship groups are often more knowledgeable and able to spend more time restoring habitats than governments. Building on this community desire, and providing the right kind of assistance, could pay large dividends in fishery management.

3.4 Implications

There are a number of issues facing freshwater fisheries management in this new century, but there are also many opportunities, which, if pursued, may help to offset these issues.

Habitat Erosion

This will continue to be one of the most difficult, if not the most complicated issue, to contend with in fisheries. From access development to water quantity and quality, preserving all of the habitats fish need to survive and flourish so there are harvestable populations will always need to be at the forefront. Even with global warming, habitats

must be maintained such that the aquatic ecosystem can respond to changing conditions, and the space is retained in the event that conditions improve.

There is no easy way to protect habitat. There are ways—from legislation through guidelines and stewardship programs to voluntary codes of practice—and more are being developed each day. The keys are governments' vigilance and willingness to act, continued public education and a fostering of concern and, possibly, more transfer of responsibility, ability and control to local bodies.

Biodiversity Preservation

The continuing increase in the number of species at risk, both aquatic and terrestrial, has required a response from environmental agencies aimed at preserving biodiversity. This agenda will remain strong, particularly with global climate change and diminishing habitats.

This concern will not always have a negative affect on the recreational angling community. In fact, the concern over maintaining biodiversity can fit well with improved management of sports fishing. If the recreational fishing community, along with the government, can do a better job of stewardship and promotion of the concept of wise use, sustainable sports fishing and biodiversity will be well served.

Exotics and Transplants

Introductions of non-indigenous species can occur naturally, but most often, human intervention is the cause, be it inadvertently or deliberately. With few exceptions, introductions of exotic species have been harmful to ecosystems.
The introduction of non-indigenous species must be rigorously controlled and monitored. Any proposed introductions must be supported by impeccable rationale and process. Both government and the recreational fishing community should be involved in the decision process.

4. The Recreational Angler

The recreational angler is regarded as the primary user of the freshwater fish resource. In developing the future direction for the fishery, it is important to understand recreational anglers and their needs.

This section provides a profile of the recreational angler, including the number of anglers, their fishing efforts and demographic attributes. In addition, this section discusses the factors that are important to the fishing experience, as well as ways in which the angler is regulated or managed. The major source of data for this section is the 1995 National Survey of Anglers. This is a survey that is conducted every five years and represents the most current comprehensive data available on freshwater anglers and their fishing activities.

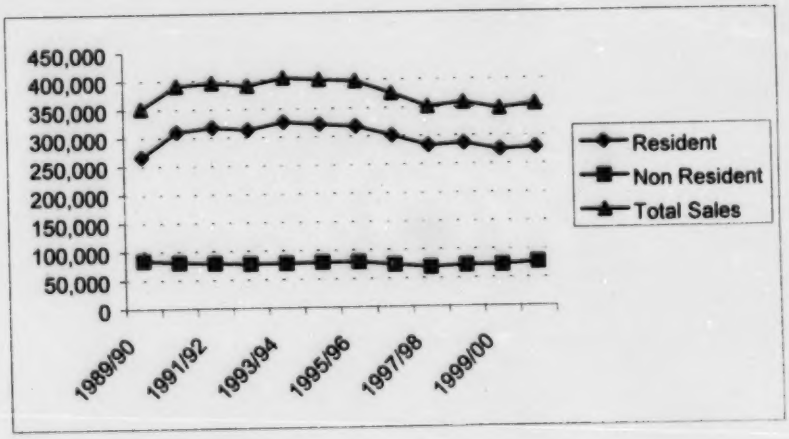
4.1 Who is the Sport Fishing User

Number of Anglers

Over the past 10 years, the total number of adult anglers who purchased freshwater fishing licences in British Columbia has averaged 380,000 per year. Over this time period, licence sales have decreased slightly; however, they have fluctuated from year to year for reasons including, but not limited to, the actual and perceived availability of fish, licensing regulations, weather, costs and general economic conditions.

The historical trends noted in Exhibit 4.1 reflect these fluctuations. The resident angler is more sensitive to the factors that affect licence sales than the non-resident angler. This is understandable as the British Columbian resident would be more aware of changes such as licensing, weather, etc.

Exhibit 4.1 Fishing Licences Sold



Source: Ministry of Land, Water and Air Protection

Juvenile Anglers

Juvenile anglers ages 16 or less are not required to have a licence, but must fish with a licenced adult. The juvenile angler represents the recreational angler of the future. Using the results of the National Survey, the number of juvenile angers has increased

38% over the past 10 years. In 1995, it is estimated 143,600 juvenile anglers fished within the province.

Angler Origin

Over the past 10 years, British Columbian residents represented about 80% of the total sales of freshwater licences. Non-Canadian Anglers (includes the U.S. and overseas) have increased only slightly in their total share over this same time period. In 1990/91, 10% of the licence sales was attributed to Non-Canadian anglers, and increased to 12% in the 1999/00 season.

The majority of the juvenile anglers are residents (90%) with 8% from other Canadian provinces and 2% from other countries.

Exhibit 4.2
% of Licence Sales By Origin

Lower Mainland	23%
Okanagan	10%
Vancouver Island	10%
Thompson – Nicola	10%
Kootenay	9%
Cariboo	6%
Omineca	6%
Skeena	5%
Peace	3%
Subtotal B.C. Resident	**81%**
Alberta	8%
Rest of Canada	1%
Subtotal Other Canadians	**9%**
Washington State	4%
California	2%
Oregon	1%
Other U.S. Residents	2%
Overseas	1%
Subtotal Non-Canadians	**10%**

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

Using the statistics from the 1995 National Survey of Recreational Anglers, it is possible to break out the total number of licences sold by origin. However, these detailed statistics are not available for years when the survey is not conducted. In 1995, 81% of the anglers were from British Columbia, with one in four living in the Lower Mainland. Alberta residents represented 8% of the other Canadian anglers, while only 1% were from other provinces. Non-Canadian anglers were primarily U.S. residents, and most of them came from the Pacific States of Washington, California and Oregon.

Angler Skill Levels

Anglers of all skill levels enjoy the freshwater recreational fishing in British Columbia. Just under one-half of the anglers indicated they have an average skill level. The quality of British Columbia's freshwater fishing encourages participation by new anglers and offers the opportunity to develop new markets. The province's freshwater fishing resources also attracted a high number of experienced/expert anglers. Approximately one-half of the anglers who were not residents were in this category.

Exhibit 4.3 Angler Skill Levels

Market Segment	Expert %	Experienced %	Average %	Beginner %
British Columbian Resident	3%	29%	44%	16%
Other Canadians	5%	41%	41%	11%
Non-Canadians	7%	46%	34%	10%
Total of All Anglers	**4%**	**32%**	**43%**	**15%**

Source: DFO. 1995 National Survey of Recreational Fishing.

Other Characteristics

Of the total anglers in 1995, 83% were males and 17% were females. The 17% share, or 53,952 female anglers, represents an important market for freshwater recreational fishing. The proportion of females was 10-12% for non-resident anglers. There was an equal share of anglers across all adult age groups from 25 through to 65 plus. No single age group dominated the angler profile.

4.2 Angling Effort

Licence sales are one measure of sport fishing participation, but they only indicate the potential number of anglers. Fishing effort measured in angler days provides a measure of the number of days spent fishing in the province. Based on the 1995 survey, freshwater anglers fished an estimated 6,288,031 days (Exhibit 4.4).

Exhibit 4.4 Angler Effort – Angler Days

Origin % Total	1985	1990	1995	% Change
B.C. Residents	5,132,400	4,729,816	5,702,650	+ 11%
Other Canadians	273,700	280,606	294,800	+ 8%
Non-Canadians	251,200	283,785	290,581	+ 16%
Total	5,657,300	5294,207	6,288,031	+ 11%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

Although the number of anglers has stayed relatively the same over the past 10 years, the level of fishing effort (number of angler days) has increased 11% for all anglers. This increase in effort was slightly higher, 16%, for non-Canadian anglers.

Exhibit 4.5 Regional Distribution

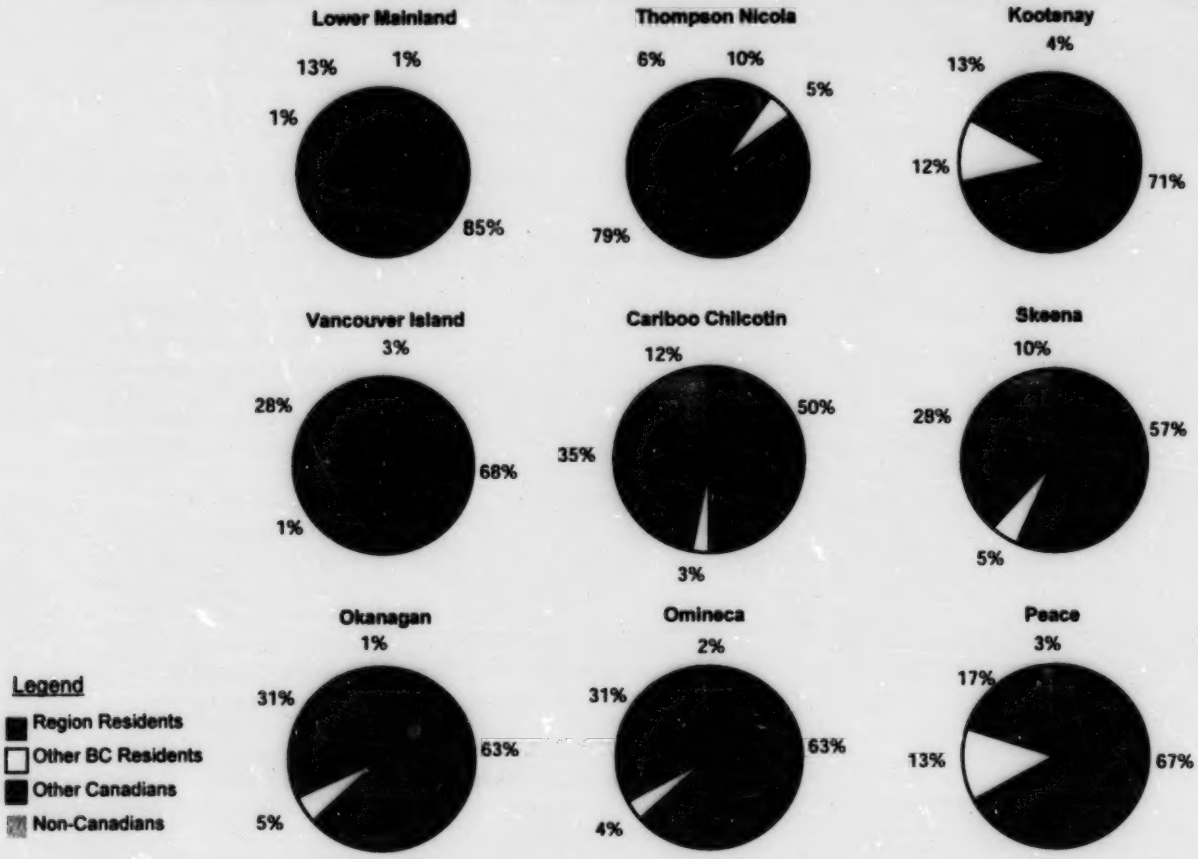
Region	%
Lower Mainland	18%
Thompson Nicola	16%
Kootenay	13%
Vancouver Island	12%
Cariboo	12%
Skeena	11%
Okanagnan	9%
Omineca	7%
Peace	3%
Total	100%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

Regional Distribution

Freshwater recreational fishing occurs throughout the province. Of the total angler days in 1995, almost one-fifth was spent within the Lower Mainland Region. Residents of this region generated almost all of these angler days (Exhibit 4.6). The Lower Mainland Region had the lowest share of anglers who reside outside British Columbia.

Exhibit 4.6 Regional Distribution of Angler Effort by Angler Origin



Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

The Thompson Nicola Region captured 16% of the total angler days in 1995, with residents of the region generating only 10% of these angler days. In part, this is because of the region's relatively low population and its proximity to the more heavily populated Okanagan Region and ease of access from the Lower Mainland (3-4 hours). It is also indicative of the many opportunities for freshwater fishing which exist in the region.

In the Cariboo and Skeena Regions, local resident anglers represented just over one-half of the total angler days. For both of these regions, the angler who resides outside Canada plays a more prominent role in generating angler days for the region.

Within the Kootenay Region, the resident angler accounts for 79% of the total angler days. The angler from outside the province plays an important role as well, specifically the visiting angler from Alberta.

Seasonal Distribution

Not surprising, the summer months of July and August are the most popular times of the year for freshwater fishing. More than one-third of the total angler days in 1995 were spent during these two months. Three-quarters of the total angler days were spent within the five-month period of May through September. The angler who travelled to the province to fish typically did so during this five-month period.

4.3 Catch and Harvest

Regional Distribution

The total number of fish caught in freshwater during 1995 was estimated at 10.9 million. For the most part, the distribution of the catch effort mirrors the regional distribution of total angler days

Exhibit 4.7 Regional Distribution of 1995 Catch

Region	% of Total Catch
Thompson Nicola	17%
Kootenay	16%
Lower Mainland	14%
Cariboo	11%
Skeena	10%
Vancouver Island	9%
Omineca	9%
Okanagnan	9%
Peace	5%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

Harvest Data by Species and Angler Origin

The most popular fish for freshwater recreational fishing was the rainbow trout. Just under one-half of the total fish caught in 1995 were rainbow trout. The remaining 15-plus species of freshwater fish represented just over 50% of the catch, with no single species representing more than 10% of the total catch.

In 1995, anglers fished an average of 16.1 days with a harvest rate of 30%. This varied somewhat by origin. The B.C. resident spent an average of 17.9 days fishing in 1995 and caught an average of 31.6 fish. Non-resident anglers indicated a higher success rate, but their annual catch was lower, as they spent fewer days fishing in British Columbia. This success rate could have occurred, in part, because these anglers were more likely to hire the services of a fishing guide as well they tend to be more experienced anglers as more than 50% indicated that they were either "experienced" or "expert" anglers (see Exhibit 4.3).

Exhibit 4.8 Catch Data By Species

Species of Fish	% of Total Catch
Rainbow Trout	48%
Cutthroat Trout	9%
Lake Trout	4%
Brook Trout	3%
Dolly Varden	3%
Other Trout	1%
Steelhead – Hatchery	1%
Steelhead – Wild	2%
Kokanee	8%
Salmon	9%
Walleye	2%
Whitefish	3%
Perch	1%
Artic Grayling	2%
Bass	2%
Pike	1%
Other Fish	3%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey

Exhibit 4.9 Average Catch and Harvest By Angler Origin

Angler Origin	Average # days Fished	Catch per Day	Harvest per Day	Catch per year	Harvest Per Year	Harvest as % of Catch
B.C. Residents	17.9	1.8	0.6	31.6	9.8	31%
Other Canadians	8.6	2.7	0.8	20.9	6.5	28%
Non-Canadians	7.5	3.2	0.8	22.9	9.0	26%
Total	16.1	1.9	0.6	29.7	9.0	30%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey or Recreaitonal Fishing

In 1995, 68% of all anglers practiced catch and release. This is reflected in the harvest rating noted on the previous table. It is interesting that in 1995, of those anglers who practiced catch and release, 67% did so on a voluntary basis. When asked why, many gave multiple reasons. The most common reasons were that the fish were too small (57% of anglers), they had a personal concern for conservation (56%), and they lacked interest in keeping the fish (35%).

4.4 The Fishing Experience

Individuals who fish within the province do so for many reasons. The fishing experience can include many characteristics, and these characteristics are different for each angler. The following is a discussion of the characteristics that make up the fishing experience as identified through the 1995 National Recreational Survey.

Reasons For Fishing

The respondents were asked to rate a list of factors that motivate anglers to fish based on a 5-point scale, where 1=not important and 5=very important. The top three factors that received an average rating between 4.2 and 4.45 were:

- For relaxation;
- To enjoy nature; and
- To get away.

These were followed by an additional three factors that had an average rating between 3.2 and 3.57:

- For challenge and excitement;
- For family togetherness; and
- For companionship.

The last three factors received an average rating of less than 2, indicating a lower level of importance:

- To catch a fish to eat;
- To improve fishing skills;
- For a sense of achievement; and
- To catch a trophy fish.

Choosing a Fishing Destination

The respondents were also asked to rate a list of factors that influence where anglers choose to fish. A five-point rating scale was used where 1=not important and 5=very important. The top five factors that play a role in choosing a fishing destination, were:

- Lack of pollutants in the fish;
- Water quality;
- Natural beauty of the area;
- Lack of angler crowding; and
- Presence of favorite species.

Again, the data is illustrating that the angler is seeking an experience that includes healthy fish in a natural setting.

Exhibit 4.10 Choice of Water body

Angler Origin	% Anglers Choosing		
	Lakes With Stocked Fish	Lakes – Not Stocked	Rivers
B.C. Residents	41%	34%	37%
Other Canadians	27%	36%	36%
Non-Canadians	18%	32%	38%

Source: DFO 1995 National Survey or Recreational Fishing

Water body and Gear Type

With respect to choosing a water body in which to fish, there was an equal preference for rivers and lakes that were not stocked. Residents show the strongest interest in lakes that are stocked; however, this could be because of their increased awareness of these water bodies.

4.5 How the User is Organized

A number of groups and organizations in the province focus their support on the primary user or angler of the freshwater recreational fisheries. Several of these organizations overlap with tidal anglers as well. The groups are member-driven and vary in member services, focus and size. However all groups are dedicated to fish conservation and promote stewardship of the resource.

B.C Federation of Drift Fishers: This provincial organization is dedicated to the preservation of anadromous fish stocks and to the protection of the rights of drift fishers. Current membership is estimated to be just over 700 active members, representing all geographical areas of the province. The organization was formed in 1996.

BC Federation of Fly Fishers: The BCFFF has existed for over 27 years and was recently revitalized with a new constitution, structure and mandate to be more active in environmental and other legislative areas regarding fishery policy. Province-wide, the federation has 17 clubs with approximately 800 members in six categories.

B.C. Wildlife Federation: This is the largest and oldest conservation organization within the province. Membership is an estimated 30,000 members from 140 clubs located throughout the province. The objective of the Federation is to ensure the sound, long-term management of British Columbia's fish, wildlife, parks and outdoor recreational resources in the best interest of all provincial residents. In support of this the BCWF develops and coordinates educational programs and encourages volunteer conservation projects. The organization was founded in 1956.

Trout Unlimited Canada – British Columbia: This is the provincial council for Trout Unlimited Canada, a national organization. The membership is dedicated to the conservation and wise use of British Columbia's trout and other cold-water fisheries and their watersheds. There are just under 600 members located throughout the province. The provincial council was organized in 1998 while the national organization was formed in 1972.

Independent Fishing Groups: There are many independent fishing clubs that typically serve avid anglers within a community. These groups provide a range of activities from social clubs to volunteer societies dedicated to fish enhancement and habitat restoration.

4.6 How the User is Regulated

The provincial government manages freshwater angling. This responsibility has been delegated to the British Columbia government by the federal government through the "Fisheries (General) Regulations" under the *Fisheries Act* (Canada). In turn, the "BC Sport Fishing Regulations" under the Fisheries Act may be varied by order of BC Fisheries Director of Fisheries Management. The exception is non-tidal angling regulations for anadromous salmon, excluding steelhead, are set by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

Anglers fishing in freshwater are licenced under the authority of the *BC Wildlife Act.* All individuals 16 years of age or older are required to have provincially issued Non-Tidal Angling Licences to fish for any species of fish in freshwater. There are a number of management tools that the provincial government uses to regulate the freshwater angler:

- Anglers are required to have valid fishing licences for which they must pay licence fees;
- Anglers must abide by restrictions on allowable gear;
- Anglers must obey minimum or maximum size limits of the fish they catch;
- Anglers are restricted to a specific fishing season;
- Anglers must adhere to water-specific closures; and
- Anglers face restrictions on bag limits of fish they can catch.

Conservation Surcharge stamps are supplementary licences required when fishing for steelhead, or retaining salmon or specific stocks of trout or char. In addition, a Classified Waters Licence (CWL) is required to fish on specific waters.

In 1990/91, the provincial government introduced the Classified Waters management system. The purpose of this system was threefold:

- To provide a diversity of angling opportunities;
- To maintain quality fishing; and
- To improve regulation of the angling guide industry.

Under this system, 42 highly productive trout and steelhead streams have been designated as Classified Waters, which require an additional licence and management capacity to limit angler activity and angling guides.

Exhibit 4.12 Classified Water Licence Sales

Origin	% of Total 2000/01 CLW licence Sales	% of Total 2000/01 Licence Sales	% Change of CLW Sales Over 1999/2000
BC Residents	27%	3.6%	+15.8%
Other Canadians	10%	12.6%	+30.2%
Non-Canadians	63%	56.3%	+18.9%

Source: Ministry of Land, Water and Air Protection

Non-resident Canadians purchased just under two thirds of the total classified water licences (CLW) in 2000/01. Over the past year the sale of CWL has increased overall by 19.1%, with the greatest increase occurring for Canadian anglers living outside of British Columbia.

4.7 Implications

Every year, significant numbers of anglers seek a wide range of sport fishing experiences throughout British Columbia. For anglers, the fish resource comes first, a shared belief they emphasized through the consultation program. Maintaining wild stocks, enhancing and managing habitat, and conserving fish stocks were the top three areas of focus identified for the Strategy.[17]

Maintaining a diversity of fishing experiences is also critical to the angling community. In some cases, this is a challenge as not all fishing experiences are compatible with one another, and the resource is not able to support the full range of fishing opportunities. Concerns with respect to crowding, methods of fishing and mode of travel further complicate management of the sport fishing experience. Management of the province's diversity of fishing opportunities will depend on effective communication between government and the angling community. Working together, sport fishing experiences can be maintained, and new opportunities can be identified and developed.

Angler compliance with regulations and effective enforcement are two other important factors that support management of the fishery. Education and communication within the angling community are ways in which the angler can be better informed of regulations, compliance and ethics.

A key tool required for effective fisheries management is access to current data on anglers and their fishing activities. At present, this level of information is limited to the DFO National Survey of anglers conducted every five years. Improved statistics on angling use is an important planning tool for managing the range of fishing experiences at the regional level.

[17] Refer to the "Consultation Report" for detailed listing of concerns.

5. Freshwater Recreational Businesses

Businesses that support the freshwater recreational angler reflect a wide range in diversity of size and services offered. There are two general groupings of businesses:

- Businesses which are **directly dependent** on freshwater sport fishing activity where 50% or more of their revenue is derived from sport fishing. There are almost 1,000 of these businesses, which include lodges, resorts, angling guides, tackle manufacturing shops and specialty retail shops.
- Businesses which are **partially dependent** on freshwater sport fishing, where sport fishing accounts for less than 50% of their total revenues. There are thousands of businesses included in this category, such as accommodation facilities, guide outfitters, marinas, transportation companies and boat companies.

5.1 Businesses Directly Dependent on Freshwater Sport Fishing

The three main types of business within this grouping are lodges and resorts, angling guides and tackle businesses. The following is an overview of these types of businesses.

Lodges and Resorts

Freshwater sport fishing resorts and lodges have been providing anglers with access to remote areas of British Columbia since the turn of the 20th century. Today, fishing lodges are found throughout the province. Many are accessible by car, but there are still several lodges that can only be reached by float plane. The lodges vary significantly in the types of facilities they offer, from rustic cabins or tents to modern accommodations. In addition to offering guided or non-guided fishing, many businesses have expanded their operations to offer other complementary outdoor activities such as hiking, boating etc,

In 1988, a detailed study was conducted which documented the freshwater fishing lodges and resorts within the province.[18] This study estimated there were 206 freshwater fishing lodges and resorts that derived 50% or more of their revenue from sport fishing activities. As this report has not been updated, it is not known whether the number of lodges has changed. The British Columbia Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association (BCFROA) estimates there are now 265 freshwater fishing resorts, but some of these businesses will be in the partially dependent category.

A key finding of the 1988 study was that the majority of these businesses were small operations; only 22% of the 206 businesses were mid- to large-scale operations (gross revenues of $100,000 or more in 1988). Again, there is no updated report to verify that small-scale operations are still predominant, although the BCFROA, in discussion, indicated there are still a number of operations in the small-scale category. Conversely, there are also several operations that have expanded their business while maintaining and/or extending their strong market share within the industry.

[18] Fishing Lodges and Resorts in British Columbia, 1988. prep. By DPA Group Inc. & MacLaren Plansearch Corp. for Ministry of Tourism and Provincial Secretary.

The following is a summary of the characteristics of freshwater fishing lodges/resorts:

- Lodges are located throughout the province.
- The operations are well established and have been in operation for more than 50 years.
- Lodge owners have significant investments in facilities and equipment, including those businesses that are on leased land. The 1988 study estimated an accumulated capital investment of $82.3 million.
- On Crown Land leased from the provincial government, there are 128 lodges.
- Most businesses are seasonal and are closed for the winter months. However, recently there has been a trend by operators at some of the properties with good winter road access to expand their business by offering winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and snowshoeing.
- The type of fishing services offered by lodges may include guiding services, boat rentals, smokehouse facilities, and sales of fishing tackle, equipment and fish licences.

Exhibit 5.1 Origin of Clients to Freshwater Fishing Lodges & Resorts in 1988

Origin	% of Total Clients
B.C. Residents	40%
Other Canadians	10%
Washington	17%
California	13%
Rest of the U.S.	11%
Overseas	9%

Source: Fishing Lodges and Resorts in British Columbia, 1988

- While sport fishing is foremost to these operations, many businesses have expanded to offer other types of outdoor activities, including hiking, wildlife viewing, canoeing, kayaking, trail riding and swimming. These additional activities may encourage the angler to stay longer at the lodge, and they enable lodge operators to expand their client base and attract guests whose primary motivation is to experience the outdoors through a variety of activities beyond fishing.
- In 1988, 40% of the clients at lodges were British Columbia residents, and 41% were U.S. residents.

Freshwater Angling Guides

A provincial angling guide licence is required to guide anglers on British Columbia waters. This excludes guiding on tidal waters where a licence is not required. To apply for an angling guide licence, an application form and a proposed angling guide operating plan are submitted to the regional office of the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection. The operating plan outlines the business, including the waters in which the guiding anglers propose to operate. Applicants must have public liability insurance and successfully complete an exam that tests their knowledge of fish species, safety procedures and relevant components of the Wildlife and Fisheries Acts and regulations. Assistant guides are also required to complete a written exam.

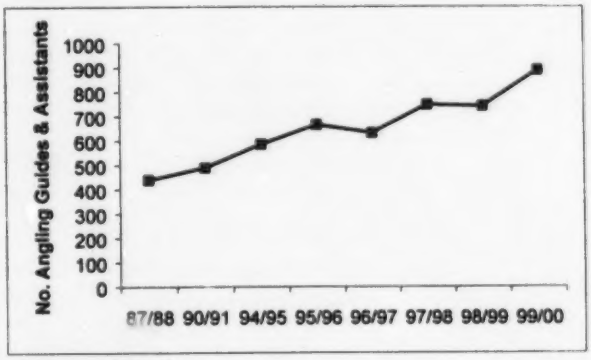
Angling guides who operate on Class 1 or Class 2 Waters are allocated rod days, which represent the total number of days they are allowed to guide anglers on these classified waters. Rod days are set by the regional manager and are based on the angling use plan for the area. Rod days are not allocated for unclassified waters;

however, angling guides are required to identify all unclassified waters within their angling guide operating plans.

The set fee schedule for angling guides requires them to pay an annual licence fee plus a daily fee for each of their guided angler days. Assistant guides pay an annual licence fee as well.

The total number of angling guides and assistants doubled to 890 in 1999/00 from 440 in 1987/88. Of the total number in 1999/00, 439 were angling guides and 451 were assistants. Over the past three years, the growth in angling guides has slowed to 6% per year.

Exhibit 5.2 Number of Angling Guides & Assistants



Source: MWLAP

Exhibit 5.3 Regional Distribution of Guides & Angling Guides

Region	%
Lower Mainland	19%
Thompson Okangan	7%
Kootenay	16%
Vancouver Island	10%
Cariboo	20%
Skeena	27%

Source: MWLAP

Regional Distribution

Freshwater recreational fishing occurs throughout the province. Of the total angler days in 1995, almost one-fifth was spent within the Lower Mainland Region. Residents of this region generated almost all of these angler days (Exhibit 4.6). The Lower Mainland Region had the lowest share of anglers who reside outside British Columbia.

Angling guides work throughout the province. Just over one-quarter of all angling guides operate in the Skeena Region. The Thompson Okanagan Region has the lowest share of angling guides, in part because lake fishing, which typically involves fewer angling guides, is dominant in this region.

A detailed profile of the Skeena Angling Guide Industry was conducted in 1990 (there was no similar profile done for the entire angling guide industry).[19] Since then, the total number of angling guides in this region has doubled, but the report does provide some insights into the freshwater angling guide operations:

- Of the guided activity, 40% was derived from steelhead fishing with the remainder on other species of fish;
- Guides had made a significant capital investment of $6.2 million, including buildings and facilities, land or land lease, boats, and vehicles;
- Guides made significant purchases ($1.5 million) of supplies, of which 87% was purchased locally; and

[19] The ARA Consulting Group Inc. 1991. Economic Impacts of the Skeena River Freshwater Sport Fishery. Prep. For BC Ministry of Tourism.

- Additional outdoor activities, including wildlife viewing, sightseeing, boat tours and photography tours, were offered by 50% of the guides.

Of the 890 angling guides, 95 are guide outfitters, who by definition are licenced to guide non-resident hunters. Although a survey of guide outfitters has not been conducted, for most of them it is assumed that sport fishing is second to hunting in terms of revenue generation.

Tackle Businesses

Supporting the freshwater angler are businesses which manufacture and/or distribute fishing products such as lures, rods, nets, electronics, fish boxes, fishing weights, frozen bait, clothing and associated fishing equipment. British Columbia has developed an international reputation for the production of innovative fishing products.

There are three main categories of businesses:

- Tackle and related-product manufacturers;
- Wholesale distributors; and,
- Manufacturers' representatives.

There are approximately 50 tackle manufacturers in the province whose products are inventoried by wholesale distributors and at least another 50 smaller tackle manufacturers who sell directly to the retail trade. Collectively, they produce goods for freshwater and tidal water angling, with many products being interchangeable.

The majority of these businesses derive all, or most all of their income from fishing. Some of the smaller manufactures produce tackle as a side business anticipating it will grow into a full-time occupation. These businesses are affected by the same management decisions that affect the fishing opportunities for anglers.

5.2 Businesses Partially Dependent on Sport Fishing

Businesses which are partially dependent on sport fishing earn less than 50% of their revenue from sport fishing activities. There are many thousands of businesses in this category, and they provide a diverse array of services and products. Partially dependent businesses include:

- Accommodation facilities such as hotels, motels and campgrounds;
- Marinas;
- Air transportation companies offering chartered and scheduled services;
- Companies supplying other means of transportation;
- Stores which sell a limited supply of fishing tackle, such as hardware stores; and,
- Boat sellers.

Near most communities in the province are lakes and/or streams that will support sport fishing activities. At least some portion of the local economy will be derived from sport fishing activity. For the communities where nearby fishing opportunities are internationally recognized, sport fishing will play a significant role in the local economy. For communities distanced from lakes and/or streams, the economic benefits of sport fishing will be lower.

The national and provincial park campgrounds and the Forest Recreation Sites managed by government agencies also derive a portion of their revenue from visitors who are sport fishing. This is particularly true for Forest Recreation Sites in areas that provide access to more remote locations.

5.3 Business Organization

There are a limited number of organizations which support sport fishing businesses, and they include:

British Columbia Fishing Resorts and Outfitters Association (BCFROA). This is a province-wide organization comprised of 150 members representing nearly 50% of the freshwater fishing resorts. This non-profit association was established in 1974 as an advocacy group to assist and support fishing resorts and promote quality fishing experiences in the province. The BCFROA in recent years has joint ventured with Tourism British Columbia to publish the British Columbia Freshwater Fishing Guide.

Guide Outfitters Association of British Columbia (GOABC). The GOABC represents the majority of guide outfitters in British Columbia, the Yukon and Northwest Territories. As a lobby organization, it is committed to supporting guide outfitters and has developed professional standards for its members. GOABC provides liability insurance for all of its members, as well as marketing assistance to reach markets in North America and Europe. Of the total 170 members, 95 have angling guide licences.

Both of these organizations are dedicated to the interests of conservation and effective management of the fish resource. They work with other organizations on various projects and planning initiatives to preserve sport fishing experiences now and in the future.

Council of Tourism Associations (COTA). This is a province-wide advocacy group. Its members are tourism-related associations, including BCFROA and GOABC. COTA focuses on provincial issues and supports outdoor tourism activities such as sport fishing.

Regional Tourism Associations. These associations provide marketing support for tourism businesses in each of the tourism regions. Several associations have identified sport fishing as an important product and have marketing strategies to support this activity in their region.

5.4 Implications

The sport fishing businesses are key components of the freshwater sport fishing sector. Combined with the fish resource and the natural setting, these businesses create the diversity of sport fishing experiences the angler is seeking. These businesses also play a vital role through their marketing—bringing anglers to the province and encouraging resident anglers to travel to new areas to fish— thereby generating economic benefits for the province.

The sport fishing businesses face many challenges, and there are serious concerns within this business community about the future direction of the sport fishing sector. The numbers of anglers has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years; growth has been limited. Several factors affect the viability of the sport fishing businesses, including sluggish domestic and world economies, resource management decisions, uncertainty with respect to government licensing policies and fees, and a lack of

recognition of the value and importance of this business sector. The Strategy will need to address these concerns and others raised through the consultation program.

6. Creating Benefits for British Columbia

Freshwater sport fishing creates social/community, environmental and economic benefits for British Columbia. These benefits are realized throughout the entire province, from large urban centers to small communities. The challenge in describing these benefits is that not all of them are quantifiable, and for the social/community and environmental benefits, research is limited to general observations. This section attempts to summarize all of these benefits, and where possible, current data sources have been incorporated.

6.1 Social/Community Benefits

Sport fishing is recognized as an activity that creates positive health and lifestyle benefits as it offers the opportunity to relax and enjoy nature. The top five reasons why anglers fish, as noted in the 1995 National Fishing Survey, were:

- For relaxation;
- To enjoy nature;
- To get away;
- For the challenge and excitement; and
- For family togetherness.

All of these positive, therapeutic benefits offer an alternative to stressful lifestyles.

Another important aspect of sport fishing is that it is an activity families can enjoy together. An estimated 150,000 unlicenced juveniles (16 years and younger) fish each year. These anglers, together with their family members, are exploring the outdoors and enjoying a healthy alternative to street-style recreation. The family fishing weekend, a provincial program to introduce new anglers of all ages to sport fishing, has realized positive growth in participation in its first two years of implementation, indicative of the strong support for family fishing experiences.

At the community level, freshwater sport fishing not only attracts visitors, it can encourage B.C. residents to move to rural areas for work or retirement. Although not documented, some attendees at the consultation process noted they had chosen to live in a certain community because of the fishing opportunities it provided.

Some communities have realized the opportunities that sport fishing can provide by developing support facilities and services such as fishing piers, easy-access fishing sites and promotional materials that encourage local and visiting anglers to fish.

6.2 Environmental Benefits

Sport fishing brings people closer to nature, and as a result, they become more aware of the fish resource and its habitat. Anglers quickly learn about the interaction and interdependence of life forms. In many instances, their angling results depend on the application of this knowledge. Anglers tend to view and practice sport fishing as a

sustainable activity. They become more aware of the potential for humans to cause a negative impact on the environment, particularly fish habitat and water.

Anglers not only benefit from sport fishing, they give countless hours and funds back to the fish resource. For many years, thousands of anglers, as individuals and through local clubs and provincial organizations, have contributed voluntarily and enthusiastically to fisheries in the areas of habitat protection and improvement, fish enhancement, stream guardian activities and fundraising. They have also participated in and sponsored education programs to increase public awareness of the critical importance of water quality and quantity, fish in the ecosystem, the careful handling of fish and improved knowledge of fishing techniques. Effectively, these activities have expanded the fisheries management workforce (at no cost to government).

6.3 Economic Benefits

The economic benefits generated by freshwater sport fishing in British Columbia are significant and measurable. Unlike many other industries where the majority of the benefits are realized within the Lower Mainland, sport fishing benefits are spread throughout the province.

There are two sources of data that present the economic contributions of freshwater sport fishing. The first is derived from the National Fishing Survey, which measured direct expenditures of anglers in 1995. The second data source is a report of British Columbia's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector 2001 produced by BC Stats. This document estimates the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generated for the various components of the sector, including freshwater sport fishing. The following is a discussion of these two measures and the relative economic contributions of the sport fishing sector.

Expenditures

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans conducts a national survey of recreational anglers once every five years. This survey provides detailed information on the fishing experiences of anglers, and the amount of money they spent during the year on these fishing activities. The expenditures are measured under two major categories: direct, and capital. Direct expenditures include items such as accommodation, food, travel, rental services and fees, and other costs directly attributed to their fishing experience. A subcategory of direct expenditures, sport fishing packages (purchased from a lodge, fishing guide or guide outfitter), is reported separately. Capital expenditures include items such as fishing gear, boating and camping equipment, vehicles, land acquisitions, etc., and represent the anglers' investment in sport fishing. As the results of the 2000 survey were not available prior to printing this report, the data provided are from the most recent report, the one the National Survey conducted in 1995.

Exhibit 6.1 1995 Expenditures and % Growth over 1985

Category	Expenditures $ million	% of Total	% change over 1985
Capital	$274	55%	72%
Direct	$207	42%	50%
Packages	$13	3%	117%
Total	$494	N/a	63%

Source: DFO National Survey of Recreational Fishing, 1995

In 1995, freshwater fishing in British Columbia generated $494 million in expenditures, a 63% increase compared with 1985. Sport fishing packages increased significantly more (by 117%) indicating more demand for more full -service sport fishing experiences.

Exhibit 6.2 Regional Distribution of 1995 Expenditures

Region	% of Total Expenidutres By Category		
	Capital	Direct	Packages
Vancouver Island	7%	12%	0%
Lower Mainland	41%	17%	3%
Okanagan	9%	9%	1%
Thompson-Nicola	8%	17%	16%
Kootenay	10%	13%	4%
Cariboo Chilcotin	9%	12%	29%
Skeena	7%	11%	40%
Omineca	7%	7%	2%
Peace	2%	3%	5%
Total Expenditures $ Million	$274	$207	$13

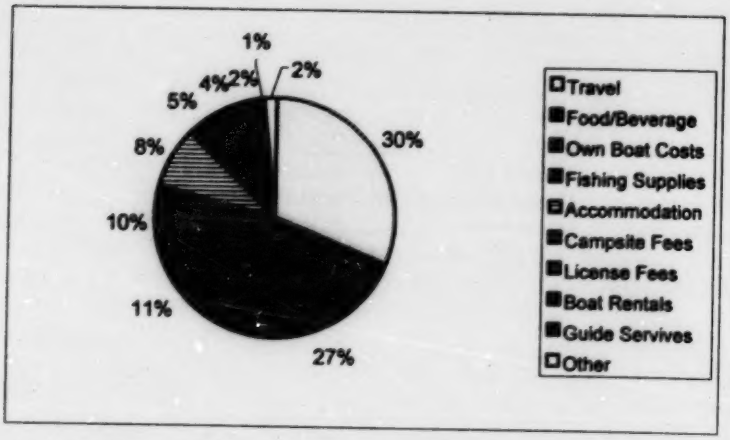
Source: DFO National Survey of Recreational Fishing, 1995

An important aspect of the freshwater sport fishing sector is that it generates economic benefits to all regions of the province. Exhibit 6.2 shows the regional distribution of the three categories of expenditures. The Lower Mainland receives the greatest share (41%) of capital expenditures, partly because of its population size, but also because anglers from other regions travel to the Lower Mainland to purchase major capital items such as vehicles and boats.

However, direct expenditures are more evenly distributed throughout the regions. The majority of revenues from packages are spent in the Skeena, Cariboo Chilcotin, and Thompson-Nicola regions, indicating sport fishing businesses are well developed in these regions and offer a full range of fishing experiences.

The direct expenditures were divided into 10 subcategories as noted in Exhibit 6.3. Of these categories, the two for travel and food/beverage were estimated at $122 million, accounting for more than one-half of the total direct expenditures in 1995.

Exhibit 6.3 Direct Expenditures By Category, 1995



Source: DFO National Survey of Recreational Fishing, 1995.

Exhibit 6.4 1995 Expenditures By Anlger Origin

Angler Origin	% of Total Expenditures By Category			
	Capital	Direct	Packages	All Expenditures
BC Resident	96%	77%	18%	86%
Other Canadians	2%	9%	4%	5%
Non-Canadians	2%	13%	79%	9%

Source: DFO National Survey of Recreagional Fishing, 1995

British Columbia residents accounted for 86% of all expenditures in 1995 (Exhibit 6.4). This is not surprising as 80% of the anglers were British Columbia residents. The reverse is true for expenditures on packages, where the majority were derived from anglers living outside Canada.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Estimates

GDP is the measure of economic activity that is most often used to assess trends in the economy and to compare the size of various industries. GDP is a measure of the value added by an industry to the economy. It is equal to the total revenue from the sale of goods or services produced by the industry less the cost of materials and purchased services consumed in the process of production or delivery of the service. GDP eliminates the double counting of inputs, and GDP estimates make it possible to compare across industries.

BC Stats was commissioned by BC Fisheries to provide an overview of the four components of the province's fisheries and aquaculture sector, which includes the following:

- Recreational fisheries – both freshwater and tidal;
- Commercials fisheries;
- Aquaculture; and
- Fish processing.

Using estimates for GDP from 1984 to 1999, the BC Stats report made it possible to assess the overall size and economic impact of the fisheries and aquaculture sector relative to other industries, and to identify emerging trends.

The estimates for 1999[20] are:

- The Fisheries and Aquaculture sector generated $529 million (0.6%) of the total provincial GDP;
- Tidal and non-tidal sport fishing combined generated $214 million in GDP, representing the largest share (49%) in the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector; and,
- Freshwater sport fishing generated $104.6 million in GDP and created 3,200 jobs.

In addition, the sport fishing estimates for GDP and jobs contribute to the tourism sector. This sector represents 5.1% of the total GDP.

Reviewing the trends since 1984, sport fishing has held constant compared with commercial fishing and fish processing industries, which have declined. GDP derived from freshwater sport fishing increased 6% since 1984, while the tidal sector declined 5% over the same time period.

[20] BC Stats, 2001: British Columbia's Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector. Note: GDP data are quoted in constant, or real (1992) dollars.

7. Role of Government

Government directly influences the future direction of the freshwater sport fishing sector. Decisions regarding management of the fish resource and its habitat influence the fishing opportunities and expectations of anglers. Management of anglers through fishing regulations determines when, where and how anglers can fish. These decisions also influence the diversity of sport fishing experiences offered in the province. Regulations and guidelines can protect the resource while simultaneously offering diverse sport fishing experiences, and programs can sustain certain experiences and encourage new fishing activities.

The responsibility of managing the non-tidal recreational fishery has been delegated to British Columbia by the federal government through a regulation under the *Fisheries Act* (Canada). Freshwater angling regulations may be varied under this delegated federal authority by order of BC Fisheries' Director of Fisheries Management. The exception is non-tidal angling regulations for anadromous salmon, except for steelhead, are set by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Anglers fishing in non-tidal waters and freshwater angling guides are licenced under the authority of the *BC Wildlife Act*. The freshwater commercial fishery, a small industry, is also licenced and regulated by the province.

Fish and fish habitats are also protected under a variety of provincial laws, most importantly the *Wildlife Act*, the *Forest Practices Code Act*, the *Waste Management Act*, the *Water Act*, the *Fish Protection Act*, and in settled areas of the province, through the regulation of land use under the *Municipal Act*.

As a result of the shared responsibility in these and other areas related to sound management of the province's fisheries, the provincial and the federal governments have entered into several formal and informal agreements and arrangements to promote co-operation and co-ordination to deliver their respective mandates.

7.1 Current Roles of Government

As of January 2002, there are two ministries within the provincial government responsible for all freshwater species, including steelhead salmon. The remaining Pacific salmon are the federal responsibility of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection is responsible for managing and protecting fish and fish habitat management as well as managing and regulating the freshwater sport fishery. The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management is responsible for all of the strategic planning for the land, water and resource as well as for tourism planning issues and land tenures. Local governments, which are enabled by legislation from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, can also have significant effects on fish, particularly on habitat. The Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise, Tourism British Columbia and British Columbia Assets & Land Corporation each play a role in advancing specific public interests affecting the sector. Exhibit 7.1 summarizes the roles of the various agencies as they relate to the fish resource, recreational angler and the sport fishing businesses.

Exhibit 7.1 Role of Government and the Freshwater Recreational Fishing Sector

Agency	Freshwater Fish Resource	Recreational Angler	Sport Fishing Businesses
MWLAP	• Regional delivery of programs for freshwater fisheries • Resource management • Stock assessment • Harvest assessment • Development and enforcement of regulations • Enhancement • Habitat protection and restoration • Water and waste management • Research • Co-ordination of fishing policies, procedures and legislation of fisheries management and conservation programs • Provincial hatcheries and stocking program • Research	• Enforcement of angling regulations • Policy development • Provision of fishing areas within parks • Co-ordination of regulations for freshwater fisheries • Licensing of freshwater anglers • Policy development	• Enforcement of guiding regulations • Licensing of freshwater guides • Environmental requirements related to facility development • Policy development
MSRM	• Regional planning for land and water use influences areas for protection and enhancement of the fish resource and habitat	• Regional planning for land and water use influences areas for sport fishing activities	• Crown land-use policy • Foreshore-use policy • Regional planning for land and water use influences areas for business development
DFO	• Habitat protection and management for salmon species • Research	• Regulations of salmon species • Policy development • Research	• Communication • Small Craft Harbours
Tourism BC		• Marketing information on sport fishing	• Industry development
MCSE			• Competitive position of sport fishing sector
MCAWS		• Local and regional government marketing of sport fishing	• Local and regional zoning influences citing and development of sport fishing businesses
BCALC			• Tenure and purchase of Crown land for fishing businesses • Business development opportunities
MOF	• Fish Protection Act	• Access	
MOT		• Transportation access of anglers	• Licensing of charters

Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (MWLAP); Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM); Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO); Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise (MCSE); Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS); BC Assets & Land Corporation (BCACL); Ministry of Forests (MOF); and Ministry of Transportation and Highways (MOT).

7.2 Provincial Government

In spring 2001, a new structure for the provincial government was implemented, followed by a core review of all aspects of the government. The results and outcomes of this review were not finalized when this report was written. Therefore, in 2002, there may be subsequent changes to the structure and responsibilities as noted in Exhibit 7.1.

The provincial government manages freshwater fish and their habitats, except for salmon, as well as managing and regulating anglers' use of the resource. Responding to its role as the steward for the freshwater fish, the provincial government developed a Fisheries Program Strategic Plan (FPSP) in 1996. During 2001, this plan was reviewed and updated. The plan provides a mechanism for various agencies to work together in managing the resource and its use. The Freshwater Recreational Sport Fishing Strategy and Action Plan, the outcome of this planning process, is intended to complement and integrate into the Fisheries Program Strategic Plan.

The FPSP is guided by the following vision:

Healthy and diverse freshwater fish populations, productive and stable habitats, and sustainable freshwater fisheries for the benefit of all British Columbians.

The following three goals express the fundamental ambitions of the FPSP and lead to specific management objectives and strategies:

Goal 1: Conservation
Conservation of native freshwater fish, fish populations and their habitats in British Columbia.

Goal 2: Sustainable Utilization
To sustainably manage human use of British Columbia freshwater fisheries within the context of priority to conservation of wild fish populations and habitats.

Goal 3: Stewardship
To foster stewardship of freshwater fish and habitats by employing statutory and regulatory tools. By building cooperative relationships with First Nations and other government levels and agencies, industries and non-governmental organizations, and by fostering public access to information, education and consultation using electronic and direct contact methods.

The following is a summary of the key initiatives that are currently under way and directly influence the future direction of the sport fishing:

Inland Sport Fish Development Initiative

Now in its second year of implementation, this initiative focuses on the 22,000 small lakes in the province. The emphasis to date has been on the Cariboo-Chilcotin and Thompson-Okanagan regions. There are four components of this initiative:

- *Assess and improve existing fisheries*: This includes stepping up stock assessment, conducting lake and stream surveys and collecting data from anglers. The intent is to increase the knowledge base on what anglers are seeking in order to balance the expectations of anglers with conservation of the fisheries.
- *Create new freshwater fisheries*: The goal is to continue to provide a range of angling experiences and identify new and suitable stocking opportunities to meet an increase in angler demand.

- *Develop and diversify sport fishing businesses*: The plan is to work closely with small business and tourism operators to attract more anglers to all regions of British Columbia. Some activities include the development of policy and regulations that affect anglers and continued participation in land-use planning with respect to the recreational fishery.
- *Improve public education and awareness about sport fishing*: The intent is to disseminate thorough and up-to date information to the angling community.

First-year results of these four initiatives include the following:

- Estimates of angler activities on 332 lakes;
- Creel surveys on 55 lakes;
- Biological assessment on 65 lakes;
- New protocols on stocking;
- Research on hatchery broodstock;
- Promotion at trade shows; and
- Web site development.

Family Fishing Weekend

The goal of the Family Fishing Weekend has been to involve more people in sport fishing in a way that is fun. The program offers a freshwater fishing weekend, supported by extensive marketing and activity development to encourage participation in the event. In June 2001, the second year for this free event, 24,800 citizens fished during the weekend. In 2001, there were 40 associated community events. In addition, the DFO participated with the tidal sport fishery. Plans for year three of this popular event are under way.

Fisheries Renewal

Fisheries Renewal, a provincial Crown corporation, is winding down its operations. The goal of the program was to complete strategic initiatives to achieve and maintain sustainable fisheries and help create new economic opportunities for the people and communities that depend on them. The process to develop the Freshwater Strategy was funded under Fisheries Renewal.

Tourism BC, Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management and Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise

The business and marketing component of the sport fishing sector is under the mandate of these three agencies. Tourism BC is a Crown corporation responsible for the marketing and human resource development of the tourism industry. The Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management is responsible for tourism policy and inter-agency relationships such as land-use planning, and assistance in the development and growth of small business in the province. The Freshwater Fishing Guide is an annual marketing tool that has been developed in partnership between Tourism BC and the British Columbia Resorts and Outfitters Association. The Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise is responsible for monitoring the competitive position of tourism, including sport fishing.

As part of the new government structure and review, a strategic planning process for the tourism industry is under way and, when completed, will provide future direction for government and industry.

7.3 Department of Fisheries and Oceans

DFO is responsible for tidal fishery resources and use. In freshwater, DFO is responsible for all of the salmon species. Provincial and federal agencies work closely in managing the fishery and its habitat to ensure they address overlaps and gaps. The Canada-British Columbia Agreement on the Management of Pacific Salmon Fishery Issue, signed by both governments in 1997, calls for cooperative management of salmon to provide economic opportunities and stable jobs in coastal communities.

7.4 Implications

The need for strong and effective government support for the freshwater fish resource and the sport fishery was a key action identified through the consultation program.[21] With the recent change in government, the current core review of government's role and responsibilities, and the reduction in government spending, there is some concern about the level of support and resources that will be allocated to the freshwater fish resource and the sport fishing sector. However, the timing for a Strategic Plan, developed in partnership with government and the freshwater fishing sector, is appropriate during this period when the provincial government is reviewing and redefining its role. As well, agreements established between the provincial and federal governments with respect to the fish resource and habitat management provide opportunities for consolidation and collaboration of efforts between governments and the sector.

[21] For further information refer to the "Consultation Report"

8. Creating A Vision

The challenge for the recreational fishery to create a vision to which everyone can agree is significant and will require effective collaboration among all interests to achieve. These interests include those directly involved in sport fishing, communities that have an existing or future interest in sport fishing, the provincial and federal governments, and concerned members of the public.

The Strategy must have, as its cornerstone, a sustainable resource base. It must accommodate the aspirations of recreational anglers for access to the sport fishing experience, and it must provide for the support and expansion of related business opportunities that are so critical to B.C.'s communities. It must also clearly identify action items that all levels of government and the sport fishing sector can work on together to achieve the vision.

The intent of this document is to provide an overview of the current status of the freshwater sport fishing sector. The Consultation Program provided a means for the sport fishing sector and the public at large to comment on their current concerns regarding the fishery and their ideas for its future direction. This input has been summarized in the Consultation Report. These two reports were the starting point for the Joint Government-Sector Steering Committee to draft a Strategy for the sector. Six regional Working Groups and a government Technical Team reviewed the draft Strategy and the final Strategy and Action Plan is now available through the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.